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STEPHEN KING THE STAND



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6 OF 6
PARENTAL ADVISORY

The Night Has Come

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STEPHEN KING THE STAND

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PREVIOUSLY IN THE STAND

Months ago, a flu-like virus swept the globe, killing off 99% of the world's population. Those who survived were left to piece together a new life—and establish the new order.

Some united in cautious hope and established the Boulder Free Zone, in Colorado. In Las Vegas, conversely, the Dark Man known as Randall Flagg presided over his army of followers, rebuilding and preparing for war.

Finally, after months of struggle and uncertainty, the final stand took place. Four Free Zone representatives set off for Las Vegas to confront Flagg, and the result was a nuclear catastrophe that destroyed everything in its wake.

Of those four, only Stu Redman—left behind with a broken leg—survived, witnessing the explosion from a great distance. With the help of his friend's dog, Kojak, Stu managed to cling to life and rejoin fellow Free Zone member Tom Cullen. Together, the three of them began the slow, agonizing journey back home to Boulder.

Now reaching the city's threshold in the middle of winter, they hope to find their loved ones still alive...



ON THE BORDER OF THE FREE ZONE:

By 8 p.m. it was snowing again, and a young, nervous voice (that sounded familiar to Stu) quavered from out of the blinding, white storm:

W-who goes there?

Kojak began to growl, his fur bushing up into hackles; Tom gasped; and Stu thought, "Sentries, they've posted sentries--"



Then, audible just above the shrieking wind, Stu heard a sound that caused terror to race through him--

The snick of a rifle bolt being levered back--

Stu! It's Stu Redman here! And Tom Cullen's with me!

DON'T SHOOT US!

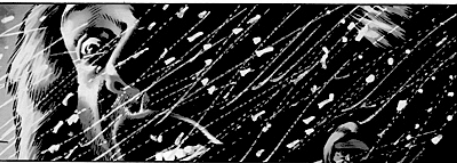


...
Stu had a picture on the wall in his old place. What was it?



My God, I'm standing here in a blizzard trying to think, and Lucy used to make fun of it, she used to say that John Wayne was waiting for those Indians just where you couldn't see him, and--

Frederic Remington!
The Warpath!



Stu! I can't believe it! And Tom! And Kojak!

Where's Glen Bateman and Larry?
Where's Ralph?







At first everyone was saying it might just be the ordinary flu, but the docs, Stu, they said newborn babies almost *never* get those things, it's like a natural immunity, 'cause they're so little, and both George and Pan, they saw so much of the superflu last year...



That it would be hard for them to make a mistake.

What a bitch.



Ain't this some kind of welcome home. I'm so friggin' sorry, Stu.

Just-- get me to the hospital, Billy--



"Get me to Frannie--"

She lay awake with the reading lamp on, drifting towards that place where memories *transmute*, magically, into dreams...

Her father had just passed and she was going to bury him...

And when that was done, she would cut herself a piece of strawberry-rhubarb pie; it would be juicy and it would be bitter, but it would be *here*...



Nurse Marcy (was that her name, Marcy?) came in to check on her.

Is Peter dead yet?

(Time seemed to be doubling, so Fran didn't know if she was asking about Peter her baby or Peter her baby's grandfather...)



Shhh-shhhh, he's fine...

Gleep, Frannie. Rest.

How could she, when the baby she had conceived with Jess was dying...?

Perhaps Lucy's baby would have better luck; both of its parents had been immune to Captain Trips...

Her mind drifted along the border of unconsciousness, combing the landscape of her heart...

She was remembering Frannie's mother's parlor, where seasons passed in a dry age...

She thought about Stu's eyes...

...about the first eight of her baby, Peter Goldsmith-Redman...

She dreamed that Stu was suddenly there, in her room's doorway...

Fran?

Nothing had worked out the way it should have. All of her hopes had turned out to be phony--

Hey, Frannie.

In Frannie's dream, Stu had a beard--

And Tom Cullen was standing behind him. And...was that Kojak?

Stu...?

Oh my God, is that-- Stu?



LATER.

WITH GEORGE RICHARDSON AND DAN LATHROP:

Frannie, I want you to listen carefully and not misinterpret anything we say.

We're not trying to get your hopes up needlessly.

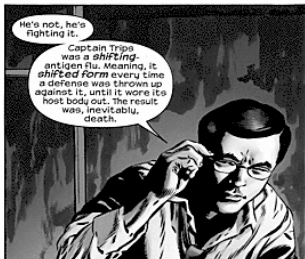
--but Peter seems to be recovering.



What?

If he's dead, just tell me!

Fran--



He's not, he's fighting it.

Captain Trips was a *shifting*-antigen flu. Meaning, it *shifted form* every time a defense was thrown up against it, until it wore its host body out. The result was, inevitably, death.



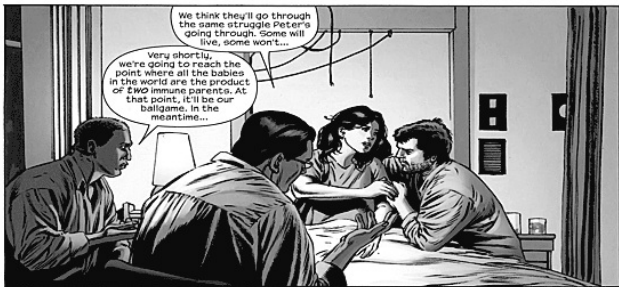
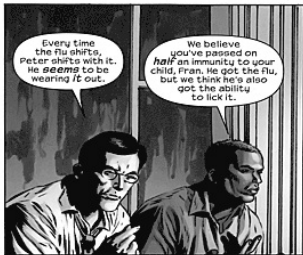
Except for us. We didn't get it.



That's right. And we'll probably never know *why* we were immune. But the thing with Captain Trips is--

--was--

--people seemed to get *almost* better, but never *completely* better. There were short periods of remission.



"...we're going to be watching Peter **very** closely. And not just us, everyone. In a very real sense, Peter belongs to the **entire** Free Zone now."

**LATER THAT EVENING:
NOT LONG BEFORE MIDNIGHT:**

So many people dead. Harold, Nick, Susan...

And what about Larry, Stu? What about Glen and Ralph?

I wasn't with them, but...

They died over there, Frannie. That's what I feel, in my heart.

Poor Lucy...

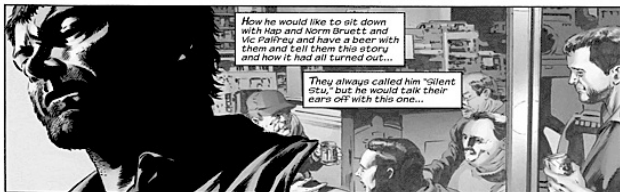
I think...they were the sacrifice. God always asks for a sacrifice. His hands are bloody with it. Why? I can't say...

All I know for sure is that the bomb went off over there instead of over here and we're safe. For awhile.

Is Flagg gone? Really gone?

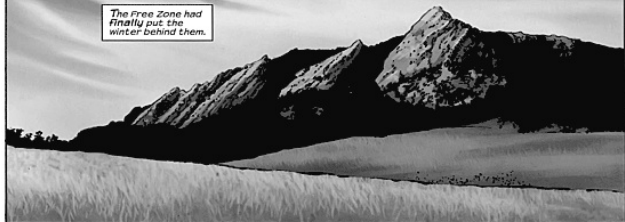
I don't know. I think...we'll have to stand watch for him. And in time, someone will have to find the place where they made the germs like Captain Trips and fill that place up with dirt and seed the ground with salt and then pray over it...





MAYDAY, FLAGSTAFF MOUNTAIN.

The Free Zone had finally put the winter behind them.



The pilgrims had begun to trickle in again by the first of March.

By tax day, they were nearly eleven thousand strong.

By the first of May, there were nineteen thousand or so.



It had been Fran's idea to hang the original Mayday basket on Tom Cullen, who was now trying to put the tag on Leo Rockway--

Tom's--a-coming! Laws, yes, he's coming!

This far up the mountain, the sun was strong and the wind blew warm.





At noon, Fran and Stu would join some two thousand Zoners at the Sunrise Amphitheater (where Harold Lauder had once wreaked such havoc) for a picnic, but right now--

--they stood side by side, watching the Mayday Chase, and--

Peter?



Instinctively, Fran moved towards the playpen Stu had brought up-- towards her son Peter's lusty cries--but Lucy (herself eight months pregnant) was already there.

I've got him. Why don't you two go for a walk?



Stu caught a flicker of what seemed like a sad smile between Lucy and Fran--

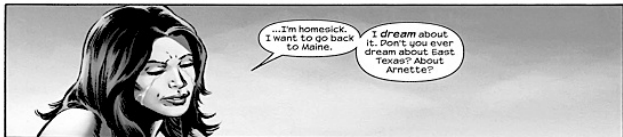
... Yes, why don't we do just that?



So they did. And sat in a pasture that looked east, where the land fell away in a series of swoops to the flatlands... Nebraska was out there in the blue haze, somewhere.

What's on your mind?

I won't go anyplace without you, Stu, you must know that, but...



There were too many faces in Boulder now. There were some Zoners who could cope with that; who seemed to relish it, in fact, though Stu was not one of them.

Jack Jackson, who headed the new Free Zone committee (now expanded to nine members), on the other hand, was one.

Brad Kitchner was another; Brad had a hundred projects going, and all the warm bodies he could use to help with each of them.

It had been Brad's idea, for instance, to get one of the Denver TV stations going. It showed old movies every night with a ten-minute news broadcast at nine o'clock.

That was one of the nice changes...

Meanwhile, the man who had taken over the marshalling in Stu's absence, Hugh Petrella, was not the sort of man Stu cottoned to. He was hard and puritanical, almost.

The simple fact that he had **campaign**ed for the job after Stu refused it made him feel uneasy.

...
What about Peter?

I think he'll be old enough to travel by June. And I'd like to wait until Lucy has her baby.

Frannie...what if Peter gets sick? Or you do? What if you catch pregnant again?

There are books we can read. And drugs we can learn how to use. And when we run out, we can learn how to make some more...



I say we take our chances and live our lives the way we want.

We can't be afraid forever, can we?

No, I don't suppose we can...

What would you say to leaving on the first of July?



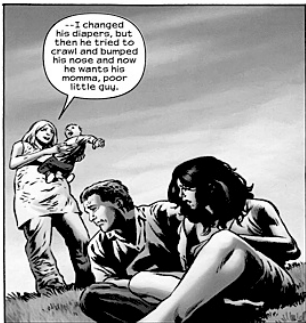
I would say... I love you, East Texas.

That goes back to you, ma'am.

Ahem? Sorry to interrupt--



--I changed his diapers, but then he tried to crawl and bumped his nose and now he wants his momma, poor little guy.



They walked up the hill to the Sunrise Amphitheater for lunch...





...where, it shocked Stu to realize, they all were, in some way, both the living and the dead...



...all those who had journeyed so far, and played even some small part in this story.



Thank you.

DUSK, OF A SUMMER EVENING.
HEMINGFORD HOME, NEBRASKA.

She lived here a long time, didn't she, Stu?

Long and long...

Look at that, he's gettin' all dirty.

He's fine. And there's water.

She has a hand-pump; I already primed it.

Are you lonely, Stu?

No, I may be, in time.

Scared about the baby?

This one, I mean.

Nope.

Lucy had twins and they were fine.



While Fran tended to Peter, Stu sat on Mother Abigail's porch and thought about the life ahead of them.

In time, they'd have to go back to Boulder, if only so that their children could meet other children. Or perhaps part of Boulder would come to them. Before they'd left, it was clear they weren't the only people with a touch of wanderlust.

Harry Dunbarton had talked about Minnesota.

Mark Zellman had mentioned Hawaii.

And Stan Nogotny had talked about going south, maybe to Acapulco.

I tell you what, Stu, Boulder keeps growing and it's making me as nervous as a one-legged man in an ass-kicking contest. I don't know one person in a dozen. People are back to locking their houses at night...



Watching Fran, Stu thought it wouldn't be such a bad thing if the Free Zone fell apart. Glen Bateman would think so. Stu was quite sure of that.

"Its purpose has been served," he would say.

At the last Free Zone Committee meeting before he and Fran had left, Hugh Petrella fought for the authorization to arm his deputies. It had been the controversy in Boulder those last few weeks.

Stu had asked, "What happens after you give the deputies guns? What's the logical progression? Bigger guns? And then what?"

"Stu--"

--can we go in so I can put him to bed?

As they went in, he thought it would be better, maybe much better, if they did break down and spread out.

Postpone organization as long as possible.

It was organization that always seemed to cause the problem. When the cells began to clump together and grow dark...

All any of us can buy is time, Stu thought. Peter's lifetime, his children's lifetime, maybe the lifetimes of my great-grandchildren. Until the year 2100, maybe, surely no longer than that. Time enough for poor old Mother Earth to recycle herself a little.

A season of rest.

...what?



He took
her hand.

A season
of rest.

What
does that
mean?

Everything...

Stu looked
down at Peter
and thought:

Maybe if we tell him what happened, he'll warn his children that the toys are death--flashburns, and radiation sickness, and black, choking plague. That the devil in men's brains guided the hands of God when the toys were made. And that we must never play with them, ever again. Please learn the lesson, dear children. Let this empty world be your copybook.



Frannie...

...do you
think people
ever learn
anything?



She looked into his
eyes. Opened her
mouth to answer,
hesitated, then
finally said:

I don't
know.



"I don't
know..."

EPILOGUE.

THE CIRCLE CLOSES.

A beach as white as bone.
A ceramic sky of cloudless blue.
An endless sea of turquoise.



He was shaky.
Bad off. Felt
hung over.

Who am I? he
thought. (He
didn't know.)

Where am
I? (It didn't
matter.)



A macaw screamed
at the sight of him
and flew away blindly,
terror-struck--

The sound of the surf
boomed hollowly in his
ears like the beat of
crazy blood.

His mind was as empty as the
mind of a newborn child. He
was staggering towards
the jungle ahead of him...



...when the tangle
of vines and leaves
parted, and they
came out.

Yun-
nah!



Then, mercifully,
things started coming
back to him...

His name,
for one.

He smiled.

Righty-O...



He held his lineless palms
out to face them in the
universal sign of peace.

Do
you speak
English?

Habla
español?

Parlez-vous
français?



They didn't understand,
but before the force of
his grin, they were lost.

They stared at him,
all eyes, all dismay,
all fascination.



His eyes sparkled with
warm and lunatic joy.

My name is
Russell Faraday,
and I have a
mission.

I have come
to help you.





*They bowed down to kiss
his feet, and his dark
shadow fell across them.*

*Again, he wondered where
he was, then realized...it
didn't matter where he was.*

*The place where you made
your stand never mattered.
Only that you were there...
and still on your feet.*

*Life was such a wheel that
no man could stand upon
it for long.*

*And it always, at the
end, came round to
the same place again.*

END.

STEPHEN KING

THE STAND



AFTERWORD

I'm at a loss.

After four-plus years of working on *The Stand* with Mike Perkins illustrating and Laura Martin coloring—and a veritable armada of letterers and cover artists and editors—the Great Work is finished, except for a few odds and ends. One more proof of the last issue, I think, which you're reading right now. This essay, but then...that's it. The circle, indeed, closes.

What do I feel? Well, I guess relief—not that it's over, exactly (in a way, I wish we could just keep going forever, hopscotching from Stephen King novel to Stephen King novel, with *Salem's Lot* next up), but relief that the core team which began this journey all those months ago was able to finish it together. I have no idea how many hoops Marvel had to jump through to make that happen—how many deadlines had to be pushed, how many assignments had to be shuffled and re-shuffled—many, I'm sure—but I'm grateful that it happened. Thank you, Mike. Thank you, Laura. Thank you, Powers that Be. Thirty-one issues isn't a record, but it's a rarity these days and an accomplishment.

Special.

* * *

This is what I think: That we made something epic and gruesome and wonderful and intimate and upsetting and hopeful and scary and emotional and—God willing—worthy and enduring. When Mike and I first e-mailed each other four-plus years ago, we said we wanted to deliver something that could, when it was finished, stand next to Stephen King's novel on the shelf, covers proudly touching, as *the* definitive adaptation, second only to the original text itself.

I hope we've done that.

I believe we've done that.

* * *

So there's accomplishment mixed in with that relief. (No regrets, though, at least none that I can think of right now—and *that's* a rarity, too.)

What will I miss? Carrying around my now-practically mutilated paperback copy of *The Stand* in my bookbag—no matter where I was going. The gentle, prodding e-mails from Ralph Macchio, reminding me that, yet again, solicitation copy was due and would I mind taking a few minutes to jot a few words down. ("Absolutely, Ralph.")

Pitching on possible cover ideas—that was always fun.

But *mostly* what I'll miss is the steady stream of e-mails from Mike Perkins, with first his pencils, then his inks attached. Building the end of the world (and then the beginning of the world) page by page, issue by issue, arc by arc. As relentless as the tide. Never a false-step, never not exceeding my expectations. Always telling the story on both the plot-level but also—trickier—on the emotional level. Beautiful work from first panel of darkness to...well, last panel of darkness, and nary a complaint that there was yet one more round of talking heads to get through before things would start exploding again.

Then, of course, Laura's pages would start coming in, and no matter what else was happening in my life, my day would get better. (If the apocalypse ever *does* happen, let's all hope it's Laura Martin coloring the sky.)

* * *

A lot of life has happened during these four-plus years—a lot of change—but *The Stand* remained constant.

What's next? Who knows. Hopefully something epic and gruesome and wonderful and intimate and upsetting and hopeful and scary and emotional and—God willing—worthy and enduring.

We'll see. That's a tall order.

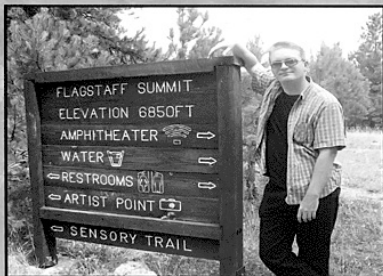
One last thing: Thanks, Big Steve, for this chance.

Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa
December 3, 2011

*Taken from Mike's regular column--A View From A Board--
appearing in Comic Heroes Magazine.*

At this time of writing I've just wrapped up the pencils for my final issue of The Stand. The LAST one! After 31 issues and almost four years of work, with just the inks to go, we will have accomplished a full adaptation of Mr. Stephen King's epic tale of life after devastation.

How does this make me feel? Well...without a doubt there's a great sense of accomplishment--not just from the completion but the fact that we've been able to keep the same writer, illustrator and colorist team for its entirety. I'd be lying if I didn't admit to being relieved that the run is over and yet there's also a feeling of bereavement there. I've been living and breathing this work for a fair few years now and, at the beginning of December, I'll get to my drawing board and it won't be waiting for me anymore!



(Truthfully, though, I won't feel I've adapted the entire work until we've been allowed to tackle "Night Surf"--the short story in Night Shift that involves a bunch of teenagers on a beach at the outbreak of the Captain Trips superflu).

Before the project presented itself I'd been feeling the need to take on a long form project and, after now having successfully achieved that, I know that I could easily tackle another one....after a while. I always understand how lucky I am to be a professional in this business and try to take into my stride the sometimes grueling work schedule ...and it has been relentless. Sure there may have been gaps in the publishing schedule but that was just to ensure I wasn't going completely insane as there was

no corresponding gap in the work schedule. There have been tough times. There's a whole chunk of the novel where the group in Boulder, Colorado discuss the re-establishment of society and what that entails. What that entailed for me was a fair few issues of people standing around talking. Luckily, having read the novel, I knew that the action would soon be picking up again.

But, all in all, I guess the time spent on the project is entirely subjective--it's not measurable by normal accounts. Sometimes it seems like I just started the adaptation six, maybe seven, months ago and yet so many things have happened in the world away from my drawing board that it provides a perspective of how much time has actually gone by; personally, it's been a roller coaster three years--my Dad died, my Nan passed away and, probably due to the literally back-breaking deadlines, one of my ribs popped out and tried to convince me I was suffering a heart attack! On the plus side my beautiful daughter, Natalia, was born...which proves that I must have had time do something else other than draw during that time!

So now, I'm due to bid a fond farewell to my largest project so far and ready to move on to something "Astonishing" in the Marvel Universe....a nice change of pace...until I get that calling to take a trip to 'Salem's Lot.

**Mike Perkins
November 2011**

Here's what *The Stand* has meant to me over the last 31 issues: It haunts me. It's haunted me since I started working on the first issue. Perhaps I'm just overly sensitive to coincidences, but perhaps there's something else at play here...

For the first miniseries, it seemed that I caught a cold or sinus infection, right around the time I was coloring each issue. It would clear up and return a month later. It could have been psychosomatic; here I was, coloring Campion's wife and Larry's mom, rainy scenes of New York with lost, sick souls wandering through the blue streets--and I felt like I, too, was being visited by Captain Trips. It was amusing for the first two issues, but when I kept getting ill on the fourth and fifth issue, I'll admit: I was a little creeped out.



Finally, that cleared up. But other coincidences aligned with my days spent coloring *The Stand*...There was that time when I heard Anthrax's "Among the Living" for the first time. It was very late at night; I was streaming some radio station through my headphones as I worked on an early issue of *American Nightmares*. Then this song came on. I missed the first verse, but subconsciously caught a mention of Captain Trips, and my brain slowly slid into focus. When I heard the chorus--"I'm the Walkin' Dude, I can see all the world!"--I dropped my Wacom stylus and gasped. I would've run around screaming, but the rest of the household was asleep.

The next morning I told my husband about it, and he asked if I'd ever heard The Alarm's "The Stand." I had not, but I remedied that immediately. Since then, *without fail*, if I'm playing music while working, one of these two songs will show up in my iTunes shuffle within 24 hours of my deadline. They *don't* show up when I'm not working on the book. I swear to Mother Abigail that I don't have a *Stand* playlist.

There were always little things. Rainy scenes seem to be colored on actual rainy days. When we finally got around to the weather turning cold in the book, Atlanta had its first cold snap of 2011. The TV miniseries always aired when I was on a deadline for the book. Some object that I didn't normally see in real life would appear right around the time it appeared in the book--a barn, an Irish setter, a custom yellow hotrod, a cornfield, a shoebox bomb (okay, kidding about that last one). They were undoubtedly there all along, and my perception of them was heightened--but *still*.

I leave you with the final one: On this last issue, after being free of respiratory and sinus troubles for a year and a half, I'm getting that stuffy nose and those swollen neck glands again. Oh sure, the weather change and the late nights and recent exposure to sick people might have something to do with it. Or perhaps it's because the Walkin' Dude is making his final appearance...

I want to give my warmest thanks to Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, Mike Perkins, my flatter Hallie Garcia and the other flatters who helped me hit my deadlines, the league of editors who saw this book through, and Stephen King for giving us this opportunity to make pictures out of his world for a few years. And of course my ever-patient husband. Almost done, sweetie!

Laura Martin
December 2011

It was an honor to work on a title as well known and influential as Stephen King's *The Stand*. Being able to realize scenes I could clearly remember reading in my teens was not only a challenge, but gave me an even greater appreciation of the material. When you add to that a group of top-notch creators and editors, all giving their best--trying so hard to do the project justice--it's an experience I won't soon forget.

Tomm Coker
December 2011

This Constant Reader (since he was 14) tips his hat to Roberto, Mike, Laura and Joe for their tireless and stunning efforts to grace Stephen King's masterpiece with the respect and genius it deserves. In this age of modern comic book creation, seeing one team hold strong for 31 consecutive issues is a rare and welcome event. Time to toast one another and enjoy the applause, team... and do get that cough checked out. Sounds like a doozy...

Bill Rosemann
November 2011



Wow! What to say? I started on this book waaay back at the beginning, before we even had the first arc breakdown, and I remember trying to race Bill through the book. I think it took us 2-3 weeks. It was almost like we were on the journey with the characters...except we had electricity and no need to eat canned ham more than one day in a row (or ever, really). Things got particularly exciting when artist Mike Perkins came to town for New York Comic Con that year and took reference shots for the Lincoln Tunnel scene. Putting those ref shots up next to the actual inked pages, with the abandoned cars, the bloated corpses and the forlorn personal effects strewn about, was surreal...and a little terrifying, truth be told. There's that eerie/horrific/fantastical corner of your mind that's always whispering "what if?" I was only editing the first arc of the story before I moved to another office but it stuck with me and each issue has been one bit of bottled lightning after the next.

In the borrowed words of Tom Cullen, M-O-O-N spells done!

Lauren Sankovitch
December 2011

One of the problems I've always had working in comics is explaining to civilians just what the hell it is we do. "A comic book editor, huh?" people will ask me, index finger placed inquisitively on their chins. "What's that like?" I've found that all of my explanations come up lacking, though I usually sum it up as a strange hybrid of project manager, producer, and creative consultant. Well, and, of course, every now and again, editing. But the only one-liner I've ever felt truly encompasses what it's like to do this job is: when it's good, it's great; and when it's bad, it's the worst.

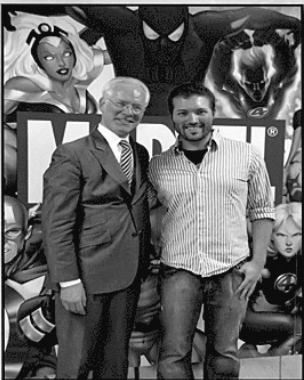
The reason I bring all of this up is that *The Stand* was singularly one of those good/great projects. It was that mix of talent and ambition that allowed a salty, jaded editor of twenty-six years believe in the collaborative creative process again. Everyone was helping everyone else, cheering them on, even as we stared down nightmarish schedules to match the nightmarish visions we were so gleefully bringing to the page.

I have to think that one difference in this project which brought it—and us—to a higher level was the kind, gentle, ever-present but never-overbearing oversight of Mr. King. With our own characters, we'd have successes and we'd have defeats, but with King's, failure was never an option. The only prospect worse than putting out a bad issue was putting out a mediocre one, and accordingly, everyone always seemed to put in more than was asked of them—Roberto would file scripts at odd hours of the weekend after working a 80 hour week on *Big Love*; Mike would send in a flurry of pages, working in and around the sixteen other things he was being begged to do by editors from all over the industry; and Laura... I don't want to calculate how much sleep Laura *hasn't* gotten over the last few years because of this book, but I'm sure it would need to be measured in months, not in hours.

Of course, if we could measure creative success in hours logged... I don't know what the end of that sentence is, but we can't. What was so amazing to me was how everyone seemed to pull from themselves their best work for this book; not just the core talent, but our cover artists and production team as well. I still look at the covers by Lee Bermejo, Mike and Tomm Coker, and see a level of work that continues to blow me away (three favorites at random: *Soul Survivors #5*, *Soul Survivors #1* Perkins Variant, and *Hardcases #4*). We never got anything but the finest work from Chris, Rus and Joe, and though I kept expecting the many fine designers in Marvel's bullpen to mutiny when I'd ask them to make a map of Boulder, CO from scratch or assemble a dossier of the main characters for a backup feature, they never did (though that may say more about their tolerance for crazy than anything else).

Lastly, I have to applaud Marvel for taking a chance on such an insane project. The numbers rose and fell on this book—as with any book—but their confidence in the mission and the abilities of the talent never wavered. To my mind, the best work is always the product of a risky bet, and Marvel went all in on this one, and I think anyone who has followed us on this journey this far will agree that has paid off hugely. I thank them for the opportunity to work on this book... it will be a while before we see its like.

I think the only real way to end is with the ever-quotable Ben E. King: *No I won't be afraid / No I won't shed a tear / Just as long as you stand / Stand by me...*



Charlie Beckerman
December 5, 2011

Nick Andros wincing at teen hussy Julie Lawry's pimples as she seduces him in a stockroom. Harold Lauder, the last living man in Ogunquit, huffing as he pushes a lawnmower across the yard. Larry Underwood's discovery that he's just spent a good night's sleep in a tent next to a very dead Rita Blakemoor. Nadine Cross' college-dorm Ouija board communion with the faceless, dark man bound to destroy her.

In a book where the world ends and you still have 800 pages to go, it's funny which moments stick with you long after you've put the couple-pounder paperback on the bookshelf in victory. The above are a handful of mine. *The Stand* is an epic, and you carry the journey of reading it with you in a way only certain books can; its story parallels your story, and you realize, "I thought I was a Fran...but I'm really a Harold!" (This is not a proud moment.) The pleasure of working on the adaptation was discovering that others were in love with the same scenes, characters, and nuances you were.

Well, not ALL the pleasure. I remember Laura Martin inserting her cats into the porch of a plague-decimated home in one panel. I remember Ralph Macchio telling me that *The Stand* was a scary book, and that an old woman with a pick guitar standing in a cornfield was not scary...followed by Lee Bermejo sending in a cover of an old woman with a pick guitar standing in a cornfield that made



Ralph's eyebrows jump. I remember taking the Holland tunnel a few weeks after we sent a certain issue to the printer and refusing to look out the window. I remember Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa calling to give his notes on the lettering proofs (a rarity in the internet days) and reading Fran's lines with such effortless sincerity that you don't even have to ask who his favorite character is. I remember lunch breaks spent fretting over how to summarize a story with more than 17 principal characters and GREAT BIG THEMES for a three-sentence recap. I remember a gulp in my throat whenever I FedExed one of Ralph's handwritten notes to Stephen King (on yellow legal paper, "Dear Steve"). I remember Mike Perkins, who had to begin the book with the loss of his father, welcomed a beautiful baby girl into his family only months later. I remember long debates with Ralph on whether it was "the Walking Dude" or "the Walkin' Dude" and realizing it's both, begetting another debate over which to go with to be consistent. I remember the two of us then forgetting which one we settled on and having the argument again the next issue.

The Stand is a great book and now it's a great comic. Roberto, Mike, and Laura have made something rare and precious; they're fans, but they're really damn talented fans. This book is definitive in the fidelity, care and love that's been poured into it. I look forward to putting the inevitable Britannica-sized omnibus on my shelf. Thank you for letting me be a part of the journey.

Michael Horwitz
December 2011

Every day that I've been working on this adaptation of *The Stand*, I've marveled over how lovingly and carefully this creative team considers every detail of the story.

Once, I was looking for reference in King's novel, and I realized that Roberto had unraveled a sequence originally told in flashback, making it chronological in the comic. How much thought and care went into that one decision? How many more choices like that occurred over the last thirty-one issues?

It's thoughts like that that stop me in my tracks and make me truly appreciate what a labor of love this was for everyone involved. Editors Bill and Lauren playfully placing bets on who could read the novel fastest. Mike's titter-worthy signs in the pharmacy where Nick Andros' spirit guides Tom Cullen. The scene where we see how much power Flagg has lost just by looking at his feet.



I'll tell you a secret: there were things that I breezed right past in the novel, but that brought me practically to tears in this adaptation. For instance, I didn't understand the depth of Larry Underwood's relationship with his mom until Mike drew it. Her expression as she **hunched over a sinkful of dishes**, gazing at her son, told the story of years of desperation, disappointment, and a little flicker of hope that she would never live to see fulfilled. Moments like that peppered throughout the adaptation did exactly what a well-told story is supposed to do: made me genuinely value and savor every moment that I got to spend with these characters. It made me love the source material even more and reflect on it with greater insight.

Too often we go about our work for the sake of getting it done. It's far less frequent that we have an opportunity to put thoughtful, deliberate care into every aspect of what we're doing. This has been one of those rare opportunities for me, and the same is so obviously true of everyone involved. All my gratitude to those who trusted me at the helm of this final volume, and to the team whose talent continues to astonish me every time I see it. It's been an honor watching you work.

Nicole Boose
December 2011

Several years ago at the New York Comic Convention, I had the chance to meet Mr. Stephen King for the second time. We were scheduled to be together on stage to discuss and promote the *Dark Tower* comic Marvel was producing. I encountered him offstage in the green room (as they call it) and we quickly shook hands. Then he dropped the bombshell on me: Ralph, what would you think of Marvel adapting *The Stand*? Wow! It didn't take more than a second for me to enthusiastically nod my head in approval.

Imagine being lucky enough to get the chance to oversee not just one, but two projects by the Master! I hoped that the Powers that Be would work out the details to everyone's satisfaction.

They did! And we were off.

So, once again, I was teamed with an incredibly talented group of creators to bring another King milestone to graphic life. In this instance (unlike our work on *The Dark Tower*) we would be doing a straight adaptation of the novel. Some thirty issues later under the editorial aegis of my friend and co-worker Nicole Boose, you hold the final issue of our estimable efforts in your hands. It's been an extraordinary journey and I'm as proud as can be of each and every issue.

Writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa did the scripting honors and beautifully structured the entire adaptation. What an amazing feat of literary creation. Artist Mike Perkins painstakingly brought each panel to visual perfection. There are more exceptionally rendered scenes in this adaptation than I can count. And Laura Martin lovingly laid on the colors creating masterpieces of mood almost impossible for anyone else to match. Our letterers, too, have been inspired by the material and produced such high caliber work. These were the people who were born to bring you a faithful adaptation of *The Stand*. This has been such an enchanted collaboration of talent that I'm sorry to see it come to an end.

The Stand is one of those King novels that has such a legion of constant readers devoted to devouring the book again and again, cherishing each passage. If Stephen King had only written this book he'd still be one of the more popular novelists of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. It's truly a first-rate fable and cautionary tale that has (if anything) more to say to us now than it did when first published more than thirty years ago. What's more, it's a true page turner with the forces of Good and Evil aligned as they rarely have been.

We knew the challenges we faced at this end, and the pressure was enormous. And that makes this successful conclusion of the Marvel adaptation of *The Stand* all the more gratifying. My deepest thanks to all those I worked with along the way. It was a pleasure just standing aside and letting the creators work their magic for you. I was as enthralled as anyone.

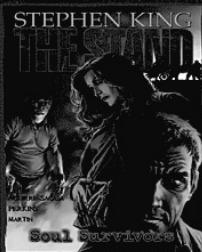
Captain Trips brought us all together to depict the end of civilization. I wouldn't have missed it for the world!

Say hi to the Walkin Dude.

Ralph Macchio
November 12th, 2011

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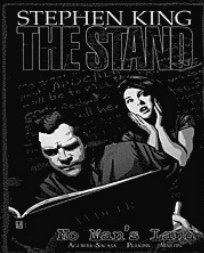
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"Marvel's vision of *The Stand* remains one of the most faithful on the market...Aguirre-Sacasa and Perkins are firing on all cylinders."
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The end of the world has happened. 99% of the population is dead, killed by the mysterious superflu nicknamed Captain Trips. The remaining one percent chose sides.

Now, the war between Good and Evil has been fought. The final stand has been taken. And an epic catastrophe has occurred, with long-reaching consequences that will haunt the survivors for the rest of their lives.

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